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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0519  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2061  
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0456  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0866  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0534  
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0094  
RUEHTRO/AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI 0023  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE  
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 0562  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0975

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NOUAKCHOTT 000203

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PROP](#) [KPAO](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: MAURITANIA: POLITICAL ROUNDUP FOR THE WEEK OF  
MARCH 8-12

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 187

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 189

[1](#)C. NOUAKCHOTT 191

[1](#)D. NOUAKCHOTT 195

[1](#)E. NOUAKCHOTT 137

NOUAKCHOTT 00000203 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b) and  
(d).

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: For the week of March 8-12, Muammar Qadhafi's visit to Mauritania dominated events. Qadhafi pressed hard for a joint declaration between the parties to the crisis, without success. Adding insult to injury, FNDD leaders walked out on his speech at the Palais des Congres when he called on Mauritaniens to "forget the past" and attempted to exonerate General Aziz for his coup. Qadhafi left Mauritania March 12, having accomplished little to resolve the political crisis. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Israeli embassy closed: Mauritanian security forces pulled back from the Israeli embassy March 6, forcing the staff to evacuate (Ref A). The Israeli ambassador left the country March 7, while three Israeli employees remained in Nouakchott at their ambassador's residence. FNDD and other Mauritaniens, many of whom never supported the relationship with Israel, see General Aziz' motivation being to "sell" cutting relations in exchange for Libyan, Iranian and Qatari support.

[1](#)3. (C) President Abdallahi travels: President Abdallahi entered Nouakchott March 6 as part of a large motorcade (Ref B). He left in the afternoon for Tripoli, where he met with Muammar Qadhafi twice, before returning to Mauritania March 8 and going directly to his native village of Lemden (Ref C). The FNDD has hailed the size of Abdallahi's arrival in Nouakchott as having debunked the regime's contention that he has no popular support.

[1](#)4. (C) Qadhafi makes grand entrance: Qadhafi arrived in Nouakchott March 9 to much fanfare. Crowds lined the road all the way from the airport to the presidential palace, though many of these crowd members were bussed in from poor neighborhoods (presumably paid) and given Qadhafi T-shirts to

wear. (Note: Charge participated in the diplomatic corps' reception for Qadhafi at the airport, but did not attend any of the state dinners hosted by Qadhafi or General Aziz. End note.) Beyond the predictable sea of Aziz and Qadhafi portraits, Ahmed Ould Daddah's RFD party members turned out in force, making their presence known with banners and flags. The FNDD was nowhere to be seen.

15. (C) Qadhafi the Imam: Qadhafi led the evening prayer at Nouakchott's Olympic Stadium March 10. Covered live by state-run TV Mauritanie and Libyan Jamahiriya TV channels, Qadhafi's meandering speech was 45 minutes long. Qadhafi extolled the virtues of Libya's "revolutionary" calendar and the role of Mauritania in the peaceful spread of Islam. He railed against slavery, drug smuggling, and other activities in the Sahara, but avoided discussing the political crisis in Mauritania. Multiple Mauritanian contacts criticized Qadhafi's desire to lead grandiose prayers as the Leader of traditional leaders as inherently inconsistent with the tenets of Islam. Many noted that Qadhafi frequently flubbed the Koran verses.

16. (C) Qadhafi tries to obtain joint declaration: Realizing that a full solution to the crisis was not forthcoming, Qadhafi pressed hard on all sides to agree on a joint declaration (Ref D). However, given that Qadhafi did not meet with President Abdallahi while in Mauritania, and the growing enmity between Qadhafi and the FNDD, such a joint declaration was all but dead by March 12. Comment: The only new developments to emerge during all the back and forth negotiating on the points for the joint declaration were: (1) the junta was willing to consider releasing political prisoners to save Qadhafi's mediation efforts, and (2) the FNDD was willing to consider signing the declaration if

NOUAKCHOTT 00000203 002.2 OF 002

political prisoners were released and elections delayed. End comment.

17. (C) FNDD walks out: In a speech delivered at the Palais des Congres March 11, Qadhafi called on all parties to "forget the past" and participate in the June 6 elections. He further absolved General Aziz from blame, saying he could not be criticized for having done what had been done before (i.e., coups) in Mauritania since 1978. At that point FNDD leaders (Messaoud Ould Boulkheir, Ahmed Ould Sidi Baba, Abdel Koudouss Abeidna, Mohamed Ould Maouloud, and others) walked out of the room. The spectacle was the top story on Al Jazeera's nightly "Maghreb Roundup," with the clip of FNDD members walking out on Qadhafi replayed several times (and FNDD co-leader Mohamed Ould Maouloud appearing as the guest of the night to explain their actions). More surprisingly, state-run TV Mauritanie covered the walk-out (albeit with just a one sentence statement), saying that "oppositionists" left the room at one point during Qadhafi's speech. RFD President Ahmed Ould Daddah, despite opposing the June 6 elections, remained in the room.

18. (C) Rumors of impending schism within APP: Rumors continue that the pro-Nasserist wing of Messaoud Ould Boulkheir's APP party will support Aziz and June 6 elections, thus splitting the party (and by extension, the FNDD). It is widely believed that the Nasserist wing, led by APP Vice President Khalil Ould Teyib, receives financial support from the Libyans. Observers also noted that during the FNDD walkout on Qadhafi at the Palais des Congres, Ould Teyib did not leave with APP President Boulkheir, leaving instead after the rest of the FNDD had left. He also made no statements to the press about the walkout, in contrast to other FNDD figures. Furthermore, Ould Teyib was the only FNDD member to attend the dinner in honor of Qadhafi hosted by Aziz at the Presidential Palace March 9. Note: Tales of friction within the APP are not new (Ref E, para 4), and are often propagated by political opponents. Still, given the amount of money the Libyans are rumored to have thrown around while in Nouakchott, a possible split within APP cannot be ruled out. End note.

HANKINS